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Editorial Article:

Re-Envisioning Classics As a Liberal Art

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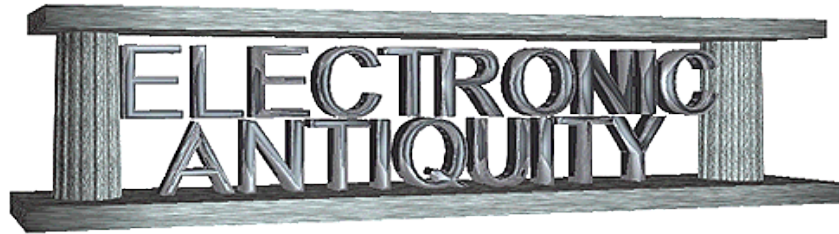
Article:

Isocrates' *Encomium of Helen* and the Cult of Helen and Menelaus at Therapnē

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Re-Envisioning Classics As a Liberal Art

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Argument: Collegiate classics, under the sway of too severe a concept of professional philology, has drastically underplayed its educational hand in such a way that it has diminished its vitality, impact, and usefulness; yet this damage can be reversed — and liberal education transformed to a new level of effectiveness — by revising the concept of undergraduate programs in classical studies and by following a few key maxims.

Quoniam, ut voluisti, morem gessi tibi, nunc ipse dicam mihi quod dicturum esse te video: latrunculis ludimus. In supervacuis subtilitas teritur; non faciunt bonos ista, sed doctos. Apertior res est sapere, immo **simpliciter satius est ad mentem bonam uti litteris**, sed nos ut cetera in supervacuum diffundimus, ita philosophiam ipsam. Quemadmodum omnium rerum, sic litterarum quoque intemperantia laboramus; non vitae sed scholae discimus. — Seneca, *Epistulae*, CVI

Okay, I've humored you the way you wanted. Now I'll say for myself what I see you're going to say: We're playing at tiddlywinks! Our mental acuity is being frittered away on trifles. They don't make for good people, just "well-trained" ones. The path to wisdom is not all that hidden. No, in fact, **it**

is plainly better to make use of texts to shape the mind well,
but just as we waste everything else on extras, so we squander
intellectual culture itself. The way we fall into excess in all
areas is the same way we fall into it in our studies: we learn
not for life but for the classroom! — Seneca, *Letters*, 106

Self-criticism is an ally in the life of a healthy discipline, though its mere existence is no proof that the discipline is healthy. If the discipline of classics accepts the self-critical premise that we need to make the college dimensions of classics programs more obviously essential to the intellectual and cultural health of our next generation and therefore of our society, then it will be most useful for us to develop a set of basic guiding principles and strategies for such a transformation. I offer here some of the best that I can divine on the basis of forty-five years of involvement.

Although what I say should be of interest to anyone who wishes to think broadly about liberal arts programs today, I am particularly eager to engage classics teachers at the collegiate level who are disposed to contemplate a re-invention of their self-concept. As a classical languages teacher, I will be using the collegial "we," but I do so knowing that no discipline can create itself in isolation and apart from a larger collectivity: there is a wider *collegium* that will also be essential in any reshaping of the classical liberal arts project. I am not going to be undertaking, however, any root-level controversies with those who are all too resigned to or comfortable with the status quo; or with those who think that, for whatever practical considerations, the existing structures cannot really be changed much; or with those who think of collegiate classics programs primarily as professional preparation for philological careers, and who may assert that any liberal educational value in such studies lies mainly in the display and imitation of professional praxis. To such, what follows will be an error, an irritation, or merely an irrelevancy. However, even for professionalized anti- or non-humanists who reject the persona and task of educator, there should be some profit in reading position papers such as this, for this kind of reflection lays the groundwork for disciplinary differentiation, self-understanding, and collegiality. Without a distracting display of learning embedded in extensive footnotes, this kind of thinking ultimately serves both the profession and the college students who entrust us with some of their prime time.

Of course some classical scholars will have already shaken their heads and turned away, claiming in effect that "the Renaissance is over," that

humanism has fallen to professional classical philology, that Wilamowitz the scientific scholar has trounced Nietzsche the humanist, and that members of the contemporary classics establishment are essentially post-Enlightenment, positivist technicians using and teaching very advanced technical skills for the edification of other technicians, without any direct large-scale educational concern for aesthetics, ethics, personal meaning, or the larger issues of contemporary society, politics, and culture. The total scientific knowledge of antiquity, *Alttertumwissenschaft* in all its glory, is alpha and omega. Such a view seems rather an utterly narrow and self-defeating one, even at the purely professional level: any graduate program that does not prepare its students to teach what they in fact often get hired to teach (i.e., liberal arts courses such as mythology, literary appreciation of ancient arts and culture, larger historical overviews of the ancient world, humanistic interpretations of cultural phenomena, basic mastery of the languages) is quite a defective program indeed.

But other reasons also suggest that classical philologists should not turn away: Many people (including specialists) invest time in the study of Greece and Rome directly or indirectly because of a larger cultural meaning, relevance, history, and impact that cannot be matched in fields like Assyriology or Egyptology. That larger cultural meaning, relevance, history, and impact give classicists both a certain academic aura and a certain type of *fiduciary responsibility*. They have been entrusted as the primary agents of direct access to a part of antiquity that has made a huge difference in our own cultural identity and self-understanding (not just today, but for many centuries), a part of antiquity in which there inheres a vast, unparalleled, and irreplaceable educational potential. Failing to leverage the liberal-arts power of classical studies and retreating into the relatively defined, professional, scientific "silo" of classical philology will likely result not only in a less well-educated, less competent, less successful citizenry, but also in fewer people who find this entire academic direction worth pursuing as a career — to the virtual extinction of classical scholarship altogether. There has been an undeniably staggering attrition of classics in our society over the last century; if the high academicism of Wilamowitz has conquered, then the numbers suggest that the victory was worse than Pyrrhic.

Now there is a certain sense in which my reflections do not address and are not addressed by any thinking about the upper reaches of classical philology. What Wolf, Herder, Boeckh, Wilamowitz, and Nietzsche believed about the scope and practices of professional, post-Gymnasium programs in philology has little to do with what college teachers might

best today do in America for the many undergraduates who seek and need not professional training for a career but rather an education that builds upon classical dimensions in a liberal arts program. I would rather not, however, go as far as Nietzsche's statement: "We learn nothing from what philologists say about philology: it is all mere tittle-tattle" (*Wir Philologen*, 69; trans. J.M. Kennedy). Since we do not yet have separate "Departments of Classical Humanism" whose focus is college liberal arts education, we are still to some extent dependent on the direction of professionally trained classical scholars to shape undergraduate programs that incorporate classical studies.

It will be useful, then, to set the broader context by asking, "Where have we been as a discipline?" or "How have the practices and purposes of classics teachers evolved over time in the West?" Several generations ago, Jaime Castiello (1936, reprinted 1990) left us an excellent epitome of the history of classical studies that will be worth encapsulating here.¹ The medieval era, according to Castiello, focused most insistently on *grammatica* to be able to read and interpret important texts for its own purposes, which tended to have a theological horizon. The Renaissance humanists looked to *retorica*, to the shaping of style and character, less for theological than for "cultural" purposes. In Germany, the New Humanism of the 18th and 19th centuries gave special attention to the *philosophica* of antiquity and made of it a powerfully informative factor in the shaping of modernity. Then, as idealism waned and positivism waxed, classical studies became especially concerned with the presentation of the "cultural totality" of Greece and Rome, with an attention to the *realia* and to a systematic absorption and unification of material and linguistic data.

There was therefore a large shift of emphasis in the uses of classical antiquity: from the analytical and technical towards the personal, ethical, and existential, and finally towards the the analytical and the materially specific. A reasonable reader will not assume that I am postulating any air-tight dichotomies here: later times have been able to keep alive at some level —and sometimes to intensify — the older practices and interests, even as the earlier ones never really lacked completely what their successors decided to highlight and develop. Feeling for the existential relevance of antiquity reached a peak with intellectuals like Goethe,

¹ Jaime Castiello, "The Psychology of Classical Training," *Thought* 65, No. 258 (1990) 249-264. Originally published in March, 1936, in the same journal.

Hegel, and Nietzsche, who at times seemed to want to *be* Greek, but even in the Carolingian era, Alcuin's literary circle took delight in addressing each other by classical aliases. Nowadays there may be many "born-again classical pagans" (to modify a phrase of the philosopher Erazim Kohak's), but the dominant mood is more one of ironic detachment. Debunking is more popular than enshrinement, low culture than high. We follow Nietzsche in our suspicion that the ideals of the Greeks were far less widely actualized or perhaps rather different from what we previously imagined them to be. And yet Greece is still occasionally used for an implicit critique of our own culture, and thereby given a kind of privileged position. How interesting, for example, that Michel Foucault should have turned back to the Greeks at the end of his career, while the former idealization of the spirit of classical antiquity lives on through the currency of Edith Hamilton's works and in popular cinematic representations of Alexander the Great, Achilles, Caesar, Spartan warriors, and Roman gladiators.

Even unnuanced as it is here, this sketch of classical studies does help to situate the paideutic reflections that I would like to offer, because the larger history of classics has left an imprint on teachers and curricular design and textbooks and disciplinary expectations and ways of cultural thinking at large. Our consciousness is necessarily stratified. The rich history of our discipline also serves to make our undertaking much more interesting, much more complex, and much harder to bring to satisfying fullness in the context of our sponsorship of liberal arts collegiate classical programs. How then do we give our younger students the range of benefits that classical studies promises, including those that each of the historical phases highlights?

That range includes at least the following: (1) an understanding of the elements and nature of language and of the demands of translation; (2) a sense of style, expression, and the aesthetic dimension; (3) an existential inspiration and an intellectual keenness that is promoted by an engagement with the most valuable reflections of the greatest works of antiquity; (4) a feeling for the importance of an ethical vision; (5) a sensitivity to the concrete complex of cultural data that emerges from a careful study of the best documented ancient civilizations we know; (6) a developing historical consciousness of one extremely important strand of the story of humanity; and (7) the sharpening of a critical socio-cultural awareness that passes far beyond information-absorption and the idealistic re-creation of the totality of ancient Mediterranean worlds towards some training in political and social *judgment* that might be serve well in the

creative *transformation and stabilization* of society today (— and I would hold that these two efforts not only can but *must* be undertaken together). These seven elements simply derive from standard classical liberal arts practices, i.e., the study of language, letters (in the broad sense), aesthetics, ethics, philosophy, anthropology, *realia*, history, and political-social-cultural reflection. Imagine, for example, what must be included in a thorough study of Plato's *Republic* alone if it is appreciated holistically (in the humanistic manner) and not simply under the filter of a single discipline that might merely look at one particular element in it, like the doctrine of forms. Of course, we could go on to add to our list other elements like the range of understanding and experience involved in fables and folklore and popular wisdom, religion, and theology. These dimensions define an extraordinarily worthwhile undergraduate menu.

But can any program actually be expected to do all this? Are we setting ourselves up for inevitable disappointment by the very contemplation of such ambitious ends for an all-too-limited course of studies, over and against the well-known professional specializing dynamics that tend to force teachers, for the sake of publishable research, into a philological nook here or an archaeological cranny there? As educators, as those partially entrusted with the formation of the next generation, we cannot be satisfied with the nook or the cranny. The profession must be able to differentiate itself to fulfill different kinds of tasks, and the educational task is without any doubt the most far-reaching and important one of all, and yet I am not suggesting that we try to accomplish any kind of "totalistic" management of the expansive potential of our field. *In medio stat virtus*: between these two directions, we can at least attempt to realize the importance of clarifying a realistic set of expectations and of maintaining a certain integrated balance as we conscientiously try to contribute what we can. That is, we can attempt to keep the full range of the greatest values of classical studies in mind as we critique, reshape, refine, and administer our programs. This conception of the enterprise presupposes a certain discipline of mind and soul on the part of college teachers of classics. It is a fully professional askesis, but the profession involved is not philology *per se* so much as it is that of liberal *paideia*. This distinction should not ever be lost on classical philologists — the classical world invented it. Out of a liberal arts classical program can come fine and scientific philologists, but the program should be constructed so as to produce so much more.

My second suggestion is based on the fact that the historical framework I have given above (relying on Jaime Castiello) offers some

help in the structuring of our efforts. First, let me specify our problem as the same one that is perhaps the greatest problem facing humanistic education today, the problem of establishing and practicing an *order of learning*. It would seem hard to deny that a program in which the fourth year builds on the third which builds on the second which builds on the first is *prima facie* superior to one in which there is no ordering of parts beyond, say, courses of the "lower and upper divisions" that can be taken in many different orders. What might we do to organize? Let me tentatively present just one example of a possible line of thought, with full awareness that some "complete" discrimination and arrangement of elements is not only impossible but undesirable: The history of our discipline might suggest to us that there is an advantage gained by putting *grammatica* and *realia* (which would include art history and archaeology) at the beginning; *retorica*, *poetica*, and *historica* in the middle; and *philosophica* at the end of the program. The apparent passage from the concrete to the abstract, or from the common-sense to the theoretical, might connote a Platonism to some, but the goal is a certain fullness of vision, that is, an expansive, dialectical cultural horizon. Ancient *philosophia* also aimed not just at theory or a refined understanding of arguments but at a certain existential stance and practice.

The order as outlined here also has the advantage of supporting the passage from the foundational linguistic level of culture to the sensory aspects of it, on towards that part of it which speaks far more directly to us in our particular personal and corporate circumstances today. Listening well precedes interpretation, evaluation, appropriation, and action. The general structure also makes formational sense, since it puts the most complex and subtle and far-reaching undertakings at the end of the program rather than at its beginning. Within such an arrangement, we might try to preserve that most valuable idealizing moment (in which one gets a sense of the possible positive worth of the object of study) as well as the critical moment (in which one realizes the limits of what has been done and can be done), without losing the concreteness that should be present from the beginning. It is easy to imagine another approach that would have all elements worked on at progressively difficult levels in each year. There will have to be some art and artificiality to any such plan, some pedagogical construction and artifice, of course. That is simply unavoidable in any curricular design. But the important thing is that we think in terms of the whole, that we ask about what we are deciding to cover and when we try to cover it in each student's program.

Many will say that all attempts at any such ordering are doomed, given the relevant range of material, complexities that arise with transfer students, professors' varied research interests and schedules of leaves, and the like. The typical "rationale" in the major seems to be something like: "Simply work on the available materials and courses; progressively gain proficiencies in various techniques and areas; figure out what you might need to know for a comprehensive exam if there is one. Start anywhere and extend your experience in any way that is possible for you, observing how professionals go about their chosen tasks." According to this approach, classics will imitate the sciences in learning how to produce positive, provable results that derive from methodologies that are shown to be theoretically well-grounded. But I would propose that this is a misleading path that has now and again been exposed as thoroughly inappropriate for the humanities. It would be far better to "imitate the sciences" by following their fine sense for the order of learning. Consider the range and order of courses that pre-med students are required to take, no matter what their ultimate area of expertise. Mathematics also provides an example of how various studies like algebra and geometry are necessary at the beginning of the course of studies in order for the student to begin the calculus and more advanced types of specialties.

If others, then, can create such well-structured curricular systems, this kind of program is conceivable for classics as well, *mutatis mutandis*. Classicists too can define essentials and proportion their inclusion in an organized, internally coherent curriculum. They can try to eliminate any egregious lacunae, even though they are not seeking the same kinds of measurable, accumulative "scientific" results in the humanistic aspects of such efforts. If well conceived, stable, and competently delivered year after year, some careful ordering of a classics major will better support those who want to be professional classicists by giving them a wide-ranging multi-leveled introduction to the field, with some guaranteed credentials in the range of courses that they may well be expected to teach in college programs (e.g., Greek tragedy, classical mythology, Roman history, Greek philosophy). Best of all, it will accomplish this without marginalizing the humanists who look to classical programs for foundations and scope and essential skills and backgrounds but not for their own particular professional life-commitments.

I do not claim that widespread practices are not already enacting liberal arts ideals after a fashion. Indeed, classicists have tried to adapt, offering courses in translation and appealing to the general educational thinking here and there, putting in subjects more likely to draw a crowd,

like mythology. My point is rather that, when it comes *not* to a core-curricular course here or there to subsidize smaller classes at higher levels, but to *the structuring of the college major or minor*, a more thoughtful and systematic corporate approach could enhance, or even transform, the value of our enterprise. In the short term, after it becomes known that classics programs typically give their students a substantial, compelling, and uniquely comprehensive liberal arts experience, the marketing of classics will acquire a decided advantage. (Yes, the "humanities market" — now *there* is an inescapable practical reality that it would be naïve of classicists to disregard!) But we first need the teachers who have the vision and the background and the desire to create such programs, as well as the colleges that enable such teachers to thrive and multiply. This project may require some diversion of effort from more specialized concerns in any given department, of course, but the potential long-term benefits (to the student, to the professor, to the discipline, to the academy, and to the larger society) are clear to those who have a sense of them. In the long run, by connecting with and relating to other disciplines in a regular way, we can contribute to greater faculty collaboration and *less* of a spirit of competitive territoriality. We will "share the same market," as it were, rather than compete against one another.

Of course, we can go nowhere unless institutional and departmental support are available for such a vision. But the institutional support often depends upon departmental consensus, clarity, and initiative. What then must we do in this individualistic age in which rampant pluralism seems to exclude consensus *a priori* and in which our previous specialized training makes us feel downright "unprofessional" if not incompetent when we talk about taking any active role in a wide-ranging liberal arts program? I offer two suggestions here: First, set up a departmental (or college) structure for discerning the logic of the program, for reviewing the faculty's ongoing experience, for discussing the relative merits of different courses, books, topics, etc. We must all be realistic about our situation, and we must allow time for evolution to occur. But the kind of evolution we should want will not occur at all without some type of corporate process of discernment, planning, and review. That process needs a wise and empowered "command and control center." Secondly, define a minimum consensus on the nature and proximate intentions of the liberal arts program. Do this by working out and affirming a well-informed and well-deliberated expression of (1) a broad rationale for the liberal arts major, and (2) the corresponding directive maxims or principles that the department will be following in its educational

practices and in its shaping of the program as a whole. I have in mind maxims like the following:

1. Capitalize on the best, most influential primary material.

There is no absolutely closed canon, of course, nor a single canonical hermeneutic for that matter, but it is simply foolish of classics, if it wants to be a liberal art, not to expect its students to engage Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Vergil, and Augustine at the very minimum. We must develop and offer courses that can give students a first-class introduction to these personalities, their works, and the cultures that they represent. The figures that I have mentioned stand to Western literary history as Latin stands to English. We simply can not know the latter well without knowing the former to some degree. And of course there are many other writers that, if we learned to teach them well, would be a tremendous attraction to all those seeking a liberal arts education. Sophocles, Cicero, Thucydides, Aeschylus, Euripides would all have to be rated very near the top in influence, and so would those who were more popular in earlier times, like Herodotus, Seneca, Plutarch, Horace, Ovid, Lucian, Horace, and Pindar. We must communicate a lively sense of the *value* of reading such authors: the liberal arts student wants to read the works of course, but not without knowing *why* they have been considered "great" in some respect. If we have no sense of this "why?" and if we can not communicate it to our students, we must resign ourselves to marginal status in the liberal arts today or even renounce the idea that we are educators. Knowing the latest critical methodology does not compensate for such a loss. Our larger goal is not so much *Wissenschaft* as it is the orientation of the person to a larger *Weisheit*. Even those who simplistically and anachronistically decry the study of the "dead white European males" — a distortive profiling of the lowest order — must first read them well to be able to make an informed critique that might itself deserve to be heard. The default position in education is always *with* the heritage, not with its elimination. Anyway our apparently overriding principles of pluralism and tolerance should suffice to guarantee a place for such a curriculum, for how could a pluralistic approach logically exclude it? This criticism is not new, but since many of us have not surmounted it, it needs to be made again.

2. Incorporate the best, most engaging, far-sighted, lively, value-oriented secondary material.

There are reflections on antiquity that are as worth reading as the ancients themselves, from Petrarch to Montaigne to Goethe to Burckhardt to Nietzsche to Cornford to Jaeger to Weil to Voegelin to Hadot. What is sought here is what expands the classical students' horizons and what raises questions of greatest value. Questions of human spirituality and cultural meaning ought to be posed, at the very least. But there should also be place for the reading of exemplary pieces by contemporary art historians, cultural theorists, literary scholars, economic and intellectual historians, anthropologists, *et alii*. Thus our students will not be kept from learning the discourses of modernity by turning their gaze to the ancient world. We must be very wary of presuming that the students have a predominantly antiquarian interest. It would be better to keep as our default assumption the idea that our students are in search and in need of a liberal education.

3. Claim and use the texts and traditions of the entire range of Latin and Greek literature and culture.

We have one of the few disciplines in which one might justifiably and coherently open upon the study not only of all the works and genres of the classical eras of Greece and Rome, but also, say, the patristic writings (East and West); the political and linguistic essays of Dante; the letters of Petrarch; the *Utopia* of Thomas More; the *Meditations* of Descartes; the philosophical and theological works of Thomas Aquinas and the schoolmen; the Roman legal codifications; the *Principia Mathematica* of Isaac Newton; the botanical writings of Linnaeus; the epochal documents of Vatican II; and what are by far the most influential works in Western cultural history, the Vulgate and the Septuagint. If Roman culture can be elided with that of Greece as the super-philologists have long contended and have established in the institutional practices of classics, what then should stop us from exploiting for liberal arts purposes the other elisions that have *de facto* occurred? We might be expected to give some attention to how the classics have directly shaped the modern world, from Augustine, Cassiodorus, Isidore, and Alcuin to the Renaissance to classically-educated cultural celebrities like Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Jung, G.M. Hopkins, and T.S. Eliot. The career of philology itself is not lacking

in high interest either: it played a major role in the development of modern anthropology and psychology and sociology, so the genealogy of the rise of such disciplines can also find a place within our purview. And of course we should not neglect classical studies' importance in the arts and in the various national literatures. Many a European nation has some equivalent of Ronsard or Shakespeare or Dante. We will enhance our liberal arts status if we try to communicate something of scope of the histories of the genres pioneered or brilliantly realized by the Greeks and Romans, like epic and history and lyric and satire and drama and biography and ethnography and scientific treatise and philosophy, including philosophical dialogue, and the various types of oratory and rhetoric. The same holds true for non-literary inventions that have an important place in the history of the classical cultures, like democracy and coinage. Such rich relevance seems to call for some type of regular, ordered overview. Otherwise, it may remain all too fuzzy to those who should be most keenly aware of it. The educational impact will be blunted.

After such a soaring flight, I must repeat: I am not suggesting that we all feel responsible for teaching all of these items, but the fact is that classical studies will be more of a liberal art the more it can confidently show some intelligent consciousness of the range of the entire classical matrix and somehow make it vividly present. It is preferable that this happen in a way that impresses the learners as ordered rather than as arbitrary and ad hoc, but a certain amount of play is also important: that momentary digression, reference, or allusion can give surprising depth and sparkle to the educational moment. The norms of *advanced academic professionalism* should not, at the college level, be allowed to override *introductory paideutic professionalism*. These are both professionalisms, and both necessary for disciplinary health. Some departments should feel entitled to work out an entire cycle in the History of Classical Humanism, and even to offer it as a special track for their classical majors, one that might well be taught through an institute or by an interdisciplinary faculty. After all the talk about the dangers of specialization, departmentalization, and fragmentation, it would be refreshing to see some structures that have a good chance of effectively opposing them. Of course, this means we must be interested in hiring, cultivating, promoting, and working with those who receive training in different relevant areas. The effort by definition is one that is open to interdisciplinary thinking and corporate participation across a wide spectrum.

4. Accommodate those whose major interest lies in related liberal arts and professions.

No liberal arts department should be an island. If we can serve other literary humanists, theologians, and philosophers, and all those who could come to us with special or general interests, we should be able to expect more support and academic fulfillment. This means we might include in our curricular plans some philosophical, New Testament, and patristic Greek, the Vulgate, scholastic and Renaissance Latin, and so on, but it also means that we might offer other courses and programs with the interests of these special sub-groups in mind. No doubt the teachers themselves will often be put in the position of learners; they will also probably end up as far stronger and wiser guides than they would have otherwise ever had the chance to be. Such a prospect may be intimidating at first, especially to those who have known the confidence that comes with being the world's greatest (and perhaps only) expert on a particular area. But if an institution is really interested in showing that it values the broadening of its college professors for the sake of the students' education, no doubt the right incentives can be found to overcome these hesitations.

5. Spend quality time and effort on overviews.

One very important aim of undergraduate education as a whole is the building up of various *frameworks of understanding through particulars*. These frameworks can be of various types (for example, disciplinary, philosophical, linguistic, literary, chronological, historical, political, social, cultural, religious). Classical studies can contribute in special ways to this project because of their extensive range: students can learn about the cardinal virtues, or various philosophical positions, or types of government, or social stratification, or major genres of literature, or types of rhetorical expression, or technological breakthroughs, or the complex cultural dynamics resulting from the interplay of many such elements. Certainly classics is not itself philosophy as such, or economics as such, or history as such, or linguistics as such, even while it is perfectly positioned to open onto these various pursuits. It can helpfully draw from what has had the greatest impact on our larger cultural history and from what seems most instructive even by way of contrast with our manner of life today. The discipline should therefore work out and deliver

propaedeutic and integrative overviews that are of value to all college students and that are at the same time most relevant to its domain. For example, the rise of Greek historical writing is important to consider in itself and by comparison with what was done in other cultures. But then there needs to be some time devoted to the concrete carriers of this achievement. Students should have some sense of the who and the when as well as the what: they should know about Herodotus and Thucydides and also about Polybius and Ammianus Marcellinus, even if there is no time for them to read all such writers. Even with individual writers like Aristotle, there needs to be a summary presentation of the thinker's achievement, not just an in-depth analysis of a single work or part of a work. What is appropriate for graduate courses is not necessarily so for undergraduate ones.

Now of course the objection will arise that encyclopedic overviews are boring, shallow, and easily attained by anyone with access to Wikipedia. In reply, I would say first that anything in excess and anything presented in a spiritless way can be boring. Excessive attention to particulars can be equally jejune. In any good pedagogy there needs to be an appropriate balancing of the general and the concrete. The encyclopedic aspect of the endeavor need not consume a huge portion of the class-time, but it is essential. Even that ultra-rigorous tradition of German philology worked hard to attain a kind of encyclopedic consciousness, in the visionary plans of Friedrich Wolf, in the introductory graduate-level *Encyclopädie* courses like those taught by Nietzsche and Gottfried Bernhardt, and in the ponderous summary achievement of the Pauly-Wissowa *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. One might say that the very concept of *Altertumswissenschaft* is itself by definition an encyclopedic kind of knowledge. This is therefore one way in which the liberal arts program in classics can provide a smoother entrée to higher studies without attempting precisely the same thing: the project of developing broad and deep and integrated views exists at both levels, but the liberal arts presentation is more firmly oriented to the life-world and the developing intellectual and personal consciousness of the student.

Furthermore, one of the reasons for having standing academic structures and credentialing programs in the first place is to guarantee a certain level of competence that implies the coverage of certain fundamentals. Students have a right to expect that major dimensions of the field will not be entirely left out or merely left to the whim of the individual students or teachers and to the chances of circumstance in yearly shake-out of courses. (Imagine a pre-medical student who studies

the nervous but not the muscular system.) In addition, we have many well-written overviews available to us today. We should use them judiciously. They give greater meaning and scope to our programs.

6. Substantially revise the teaching of Greek and Latin to accomplish more in a shorter amount of time and in a more enjoyable way.

The language-learning that has been such a dominant feature of our programs must in many cases be revised to better accommodate the liberal arts major who has a limited amount of time but who still needs language study for an adequate understanding of the civilizations as well as for its intrinsic value. Those who come to us from other academic majors will also appreciate a first-rate program of language-instruction that produces solid results without absorbing them into a heavy life-long commitment. We need (1) an *obviously interested intention* to establish a certain linguistic fluency, and (2) the *sustained means* to that end, supported strongly and available year after year. We must set limits to how much we should reasonably ask the students to accomplish in Latin and Greek, but of some core achievement there should be no doubt. We must also subordinate (not eliminate) that philologically-inspired type of language pedagogy that does not lead to the same kind of deep appropriation that a humanistically-inspired language pedagogy does. The difference is essentially that difference between *learning about* a language and simply *learning* a language. Of course, there is no absolute dichotomy here: the point is that the former approach can lead in a very different direction than the second does, and the second, when successful, will most likely produce the better results in the long run. The humanistic approach can ground the philological approach better than vice versa. No department can afford to give its students the impression that fluency is not really a very important issue or that no specific "appropriational" work needs to be done to attain it in order to acquire the credential, just as no department should give students the impression that there is no essential core to the major that they should all have, even if not everything can be pinned down and covered in the same detail. In short: *it matters how well and how fast the students read*. We are not dealing with the slow deciphering of primeval hieroglyphs of a barely understood linguistic code but with languages used continuously for living (though mostly written) communication for most of Western cultural history.

I fully realize that this is a very contestable point. Language abilities, interests, and professional investments vary to such an extent among professors and students in classics that some departments have judged it wiser to take a less pointed approach when it comes to language-learning. But it rather seems to me that the study of the languages should be a bedrock foundation for the discipline, and that such language study in itself carries a liberal arts value. Furthermore it provides an activity that can help bring unity, stability, and focus to a program in which the student can easily get lost in the overwhelming profusion of relevant data, particularly if there seems to be no special rationale in the order of presentation. I therefore promote a major investment in language pedagogy and practice. If departments can do nothing else for college students but give them a solid competency in one of the languages, they will have more than justified their existence. On the other hand, if this point is underplayed, and if language-mastery is relegated to an elementary or relatively marginal status, we will be undercutting the profession in the long run and making it far less useful than it can be.

Given the vastness of any language-learning project that aims at substantial mastery (— not to mention mastery within four years), we might consider creating semi-autonomous but still linked Latin and Greek divisions. We could thus achieve more focus and integration in the respective programs; and we could better cover a larger swathe of the extended literary and cultural traditions for each language, opening more directly onto the post-classical eras (and therefore onto the cross-departmental collaboration that we can easily imagine having with medievalists, or byzantinists or Renaissance scholars or others). Classics majors in the older mould (Greek plus Latin, with an overriding focus on the ancient world) could still have a program that built upon these two subdivisions; that is, they could get certification in both languages and take courses specific to the classics program as well. This may add a year or two to the program, but that addition would only be sheer realism in the face of the range of competencies being expected. Perhaps the daunting nature of the four-year program has deterred more than a few souls over the past decades.

7. Distinguish in thought and practice the graduate and undergraduate levels of classical studies.

This is an essential principle that is so widely violated today throughout the Academy that suggesting it might be taken as far too revolutionary; and yet it is only prudent to admit that there are different teleologies in college and graduate programs, and only fair to respect that division with particular and adequate academic arrangements. Practically, this means that just as graduates usually cannot count above a certain number of college courses towards a graduate degree, so undergraduates will not for the most part be sitting in class with graduate students in the advanced seminars. The academic integrity of each program ought to be maintained. Thus, whereas an undergraduate may need an overview of Ovid as an author, or of several poets in Roman Love Elegy, a graduate may take the option of joining a focused semester-long investigation of a single book of Propertius's love poems. The distinction at issue here was well indicated in 1828 in a report on education at Yale:

By a liberal education, it is believed, has been generally understood, such a course of discipline in the arts and sciences, as is best calculated, at the same time, both to strengthen and enlarge the faculties of the mind, and to familiarize it with the leading principles of the great objects of human investigation and knowledge. A liberal, is obviously distinct from a professional, education. The former is conversant with those topics, an acquaintance with which is necessary or convenient, in any situation of life, the latter, with those which qualify the individual for a particular station, business or employment. **The former is antecedent in time, the latter rests upon the former as its most appropriate foundation.** A liberal education is fitted to occupy the mind, while its powers are opening and enlarging; a professional education requires an understanding already cultivated by study, and prepared by exercise for methodical and persevering efforts. (*Reports on the Course of Instruction in Yale College; by a Committee of the Corporation, and the Academical Faculty.* New Haven. 1828. Page 30, Part II. Bolding added.)

We should recover this insight and develop this differentiation better than we sometimes do in our programs today. With this point, I am giving an

idea of what I mean by one of my suggestions above, about establishing a broad rationale for the liberal arts major.

Conclusion

"But you are telling us to follow a well-rounded diet in a time of famine!" I realize that many will say that I am not explaining how to actually achieve what I am calling for, given the existing limitations of funding, positions, faculty members' abilities, conflicts of scheduling, various student situations, pedagogical challenges and theoretical differences, and so on. That is quite true. Much more needs to be said. But to have the right maxims, the right directions, the right intentions, the right vision, the right understanding — or at least to feel that one has begun to make and to articulate some progress on all of these — that is something that is most necessary and most valuable and, yes, most *practical*. Even in a famine, one should know the kinds of food one most needs, despite the fact that one may have to take what one can get at the moment.

My large-scale systemic reflections here are the fruit of my own long experience, observation, reading, thinking, and discussions with others, but I will not be offended if someone says that there is none that has not been stated somewhere else before. The first two maxims given above are merely implicit in the intelligent practice of classics from the start: some texts, some cultures can be, or have been, especially rewarding, valuable, influential, powerful, helpful, etc., and they deserve to be cultivated because they somehow cultivate us in the process. We should not be worried that these principles seem to fly in the face of the preaching of some academic activists. They themselves are usually influenced heavily by figures who attained their status precisely through the reading of the most valuable and influential figures. (Who did Derrida read intensively? Heidegger. Who did Heidegger read intensively? Nietzsche. Who did Nietzsche read? A huge swathe of the tradition, including the Greek and Latin classics, Montaigne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and many like them.) The third and fourth principles simply allow classical studies to recover and update the general integrative educational function that it has held for many generations of many different nations. The fifth, sixth, and seventh principles are simple pragmatism and responsibility: if we are to use our time in cultural and language studies, let us use it in the best possible way,

trying to optimize achievement, enjoyment, and meaning, with goals appropriate to the level of the undertaking.

In these seven directives, we can find what *should* be a largely non-controversial basis for an evolution that is long overdue in our classical world. Following them will lead not only to a better-educated citizenry but also to more competent philologists who will have been better prepared for jobs that have a liberal arts component and who as scholars will be able to build upon a more systematically conceived professional basis and to operate within a larger humanistic horizon. Despite having outlined what may appear to be an overly expansive vision, I do not think that collegiate classics includes the whole extent of a contemporary liberal education. Mathematics and the natural and the social sciences must be given an important place too, for they are not only valuable inventions of the human spirit, but they treat vital subject matter and they shape the modern world-view. A classical approach to the liberal arts quite easily incorporates them: why should it not, once you have within your purview the likes of Herodotus, Pythagoras, Democritus, Euclid, Archimedes, Eratosthenes, Hippocrates, Galen, Aristotle, Xenophon, Strabo, Plutarch, Lucretius, Pliny the Elder, Columella, Vitruvius, the Seneca of the *Naturales Quaestiones*, Aratus, Manilius, and many others? My argument is rather that we must admit that classical studies can mediate unique resources to our society and that it also has the obligation and the joy to use those resources as intelligently and as profitably as possible.

Important as it is to refashion collegiate classical studies as a liberal art, it nevertheless need not be, and in light of the range of the traditional contents and practices of our discipline, it really *ought* not be, just one humanities subject among many others. In a way paralleled by no other major humanities program in our colleges today, the classical curriculum came closest to being the substance, the core, the very foundations of the college curriculum for a considerable part of the modern history of liberal education. We have radical genealogical and historical links with the other humanistic disciplines that those disciplines do not have in a precisely reciprocal way with us or with one another. For example, to be a competent professor in English literature you must know a good bit about the classical world, but competent classicists need not know English literature.

If one were to ask if there might possibly ever be some "architectonic discipline" for liberal arts education, one might seriously propose philosophy, or history, or "letters" in the broad sense. Then there is classics, which includes the beginnings of Western philosophy and history

and letters and can open up, in the standard mode of the traditional humanistic canon, to all the later writings and cultures and voices of the world: Greek elides with Roman, Greco-Roman with Judaeo-Christian, Mediterranean with European, European with Western, Western with World. Certainly classics offers extraordinary promise of educative collaboration. At several levels, it is full of a diversity that is made all the more meaningful by a non-Balkanizing underlying unity. It can now play a role, a truly *significant* one, in the rehabilitation of liberal education today. Perhaps classical humanists can use this revised self-concept to take up an educational leadership that others hesitate to assume. I know for certain that we can never fashion an adequate program for liberal education if we renounce at the start what classical studies can give us in a uniquely powerful way: *the possibility of a deep and broad cultural-historical self-appropriation by which we learn to know, to affirm, to critique, to transcend ourselves.*

Perhaps the issue before us can best be put in terms of a practical decision: Should the Academy position collegiate classics closer to specialties like Assyriology, or should it rather make of classics a major part of one very rich, even invaluable approach to a liberal arts education? If we choose the former option, we must accept the marginalization, diminution, and virtual disappearance of classical studies — not at all but at many institutions. This is in fact what has been happening. If we choose the latter option, we open the door to a better-educated populace, to a profounder realization of liberal arts ideals, and to the greater flourishing of classical humanistic studies at all levels.

Yes, indeed the Renaissance is over. But the renaissance *dynamic* lives on. And it can once again serve our highest purposes.



Isocrates' *Encomium of Helen* and the Cult of Helen and Menelaus at Therapnē

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The main sources in Greek literature for the cult of Helen and/or Menelaus at Therapnē are Herodotus (6.61.3), Isocrates 10 (*Encomium of Helen*), and Pausanias (3.19.9-10). Isocrates is the one who speaks of joint-worship of Helen and Menelaus (10.63). He suggests, furthermore, that Helen was a goddess at Therapnē, and his *Encomium* is routinely cited for her divine status in this cult, and not only by scholars of myth and literature. Archaeologists, too, have appealed to the *Encomium* as a documentary source for their interpretation of the site, the so-called Menelaion (first by Polybius 5.18.4). Much disagreement prevails, within the two fields of classical studies just mentioned, and also between them.¹ The present article does not attempt to adjudicate. It

¹ Accounts of Helen in the history of Greek religion differ in the weight assigned Isoc. 10. Harder 2006, in the *New Pauly*, s.v. "Helena," begins: "Goddess who was worshipped at various cult sites in and around Sparta, especially in the Menelaion in Therapnē," citing Hdt., Paus., and Hsch. but not Isoc. Similarly, for the Therapnē cult Calame 1997 196-99 (also 194, 200-201, 232) builds his interpretation on Hdt., citing Isoc. 10 only in a n., for the joint worship of Helen and Menelaus (196 n. 331). Others, like Nilsson (cf. Edmunds 2007: 16, 20-24, which the present article amplifies), who see in Helen the avatar of a Minoan or "Old European" vegetation goddess, routinely cite Isoc. 10. For scholars of

focuses on a single source, returning to the text, reading the passages customarily cited for the divinity of Helen, and asking: what, according to Isocrates, is the cult status of Helen at Therapnē? The answer to this question will not, of course, immediately affect other kinds of evidence and other arguments for the divinity of Helen.

The title of the work to be discussed is somewhat misleading. Helen is almost incidental to Isocrates' program, which includes his dispute with Plato and the Academy (1-13) and a long passage on Theseus (18-37).² He also desires to go Gorgias one better (14-15).³ He expatiates on Paris' decision to abduct Helen (39-51) and on the power of beauty (54-60).⁴ The relatively short passage on the cult at Therapnē comes toward the end of the oration and displays a device that Isocrates has already used in this oration. A new motive or cause, flattering to his object of praise, is attached to an old datum concerning this object. Isocrates has thus explained Paris' abduction of Helen by his desire to become the son-in-law of Zeus and in this way to see to it that his descendants will be the descendants of Zeus on their mother's as well as their father's side (43).⁵ Isocrates has also explained, to take another example of the device, that the Trojans did not fight to support Paris nor did the Greeks to support Menelaus. The former fought on behalf of Asia, the latter on behalf of

Helen in Greek myth her divinity is a given (often with reference to Nilsson) and Isoc. 10 is assumed to have documentary value. Archaeologists, reasoning from what they find on and in the ground at Therapnē, have reached opposing conclusions. Cf. Antonaccio 1995 and Deoudi 1999 (taking Isoc. to support her position), cited below (n. 30). For a photograph of the site: www.greeceathensaegeainfo.com/p_laconia_city_sparta.htm.

² Cf. *Panath.* 126-30. On Theseus in *Hel.* and *Panath.* see Gotteland 2001: 109-15; on the comparison of Theseus and Heracles in *Hel.* 23-29: 253-59; on Theseus and democracy in *Hel.* 32-37: 277-84.

³ It is reasonably assumed that in 14 Isoc. is referring to Gorgias. For a comparison of Gorg. *Hel.* and Isoc. *Hel.* see Zagagi. 1985: 77-82. On Isocrates' criticism of Gorgias' *Helen* on the basis of genre (viz., Gorgias wrote an *apologia*, not an encomium), see Ford 2002: 252-54.

⁴ Mirhady and Too 2000: "One could almost say there are three speeches within this speech" (i.e., 1-15, 16-38, and 39-69). On the question of the unity of the oration, see the conclusion of this article.

⁵ The genealogy of Paris that Isocrates probably has in mind is: Zeus – Dardanus – Erichthonius – Tros – Ilus – Laomedon – Priam – Paris; Zajonz 2002: 225. Papillon 1996: 13-14 discusses Isoc.' use of the myth of Paris. As with other myths in Isoc., "the treatment is limited and specifically linked to Isocratean themes."

Europe, “believing that in whichever the person of Helen resided this land would be more prosperous” (51).

The passage relevant to the Therapnē cult begins as follows:

Οὐ γὰρ μόνον ἀθανασίας ἔτυχεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν δύναμιν
ισόθεον λαβοῦσα πρῶτον μὲν τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἤδη
κατεχομένους ὑπὸ τῆς πεπρωμένης εἰς θεοὺς ἀνήγαγεν,
βουλομένη δὲ πιστὴν ποιῆσαι τὴν μεταβολὴν οὕτως
αὐτοῖς τὰς τιμὰς ἐναργεῖς ἔδωκεν ὥσθ' ὀρωμένους ὑπὸ
τῶν ἐν τῇ θαλάττῃ κινδυνευόντων σώζειν, οἵτινες ἂν
αὐτοὺς εὐσεβῶς κατακαλέσωνται (61).⁶

Not only did she get immortality (noun ἀθανασία) but she also, having acquired god-like (adj. ισόθεος) power, she first raised her brothers, now held down by death, to the gods. Wanting to give credibility to their transformation she gave them such conspicuous honors that they are seen by and save those in peril on the sea, whoever calls upon them piously.

For her immortality, there were already three accounts, none of them easily reconcilable, however, with Isocrates' picture of the cult at Therapnē.

In Euripides' *Orestes* Apollo proclaims that Helen, as Zeus' daughter, is immortal (1635). In other words, she did not acquire immortality; it was her birthright. (Apollo also proclaims that she will become, along with her brothers, a savior for sailors—an “ad hoc invention” [1636-37].⁷ Her apotheosis even entails catasterism—although “the carefully phrased new mythographic formulation is appropriately imprecise” [1682-90].⁸ In Euripides' *Helen*, the Dioscuri predict their sister's sharing in a joint cult with them [1666-69], probably a matter of her joining them in the *theoxenia* [cf. Pind. *O.* 3.1-2].) Pausanias is the source for another kind of immortality of Helen. He heard a story in Croton and in Himera about a certain Crotoniate man, Leonymus. This person, wounded in battle, was sent by the priestess at Delphi to Leukē, an island in the Euxine at the mouth of the Ister, to be

⁶ The Greek text here and in the other quotations from *Hel.* is that of Mandilaras 2003.2.

⁷ Willink 1986: 352 on vv. 1635-7. West 1987: 291 on v. 1637 takes the same view, with some qualification.

⁸ Willink 1986: 360 on vv. 1689-90

cured by Ajax. Upon his return to Croton, cured, he reported that he had seen, amongst other heroes, Helen, who was married to Achilles (3.19.13). Achilles had been snatched from his pyre and carried there by his mother.⁹ Pausanias' story does not give an explanation for Helen's immortality. Like the joint cult with her brothers, however, this story rules out Menelaus and, for this reason, cannot be squared with the description of the cult at Therapnē. Finally, there is the tradition that Helen and Menelaus go to the Elysian Field, he simply because he was married to her.¹⁰ Life in the Elysian Field is everlasting but it is a life "for mortals" (ἀνθρώποισι, *Od.* 4.565), not gods. This tradition does not elevate Helen and Menelaus to the status that they ostensibly attain in Isocrates.

Isocrates is in fact offering a new cause of Helen's immortality, which he finds in her beauty. In his excursus on beauty (54-60) preceding the passage quoted above, one of the themes is that beauty (κάλλος) is the most divine of human characteristics (54). Of superior human qualities it is the most immediately compelling. At first sight we are well-disposed to beautiful persons and those alone, "like the gods," we do not refuse to serve (56). Piety (εὐσέβεια) is one of the things that we feel toward beauty (58). Even Zeus thought it appropriate to approach beauty in lowly guise—as Amphitryon to Alcmene, as a shower of gold to Danaë, as a swan to Nemesis, and again in this form to Leda (59).¹¹ "Here is the greatest proof of my words: we would find more persons who have been made immortal (adj. ἀθάνατος) because of beauty than because of all other virtues." "Helen surpassed (lit., "got more than," πλέον ἔσχευ) these persons to the extent that she excelled

⁹ *Aithiopsis* arg. B, p. 69.19-24 Bernabé = *Procli Aethiopidos Enarratio*, p. 47.26-28 Davies; Pind. *O.* 2.79-80. Cf. the next n.

¹⁰ *Od.* 4.561-69 (Proteus to Menelaus). Or Menelaus will go to the Island of the Blest (Eur. *Hel.* 1676-77); cf. Apollod. *Epit.* 6.29. (In Pind.'s short list of those on the Island of the Blest at *O.* 2.78-80 Menelaus is not included.) The Elysian Field and the Island of the Blest are for all intents and purposes the same place. See Stephanie West in Heubeck, West and Hainsworth 1988: 227; Nisetich 1988: 13 and n. 48; Nagy 1999[1979]: 167-68; M. L. West 2007: 349.

¹¹ Isoc. does not trouble to choose between the two conflicting accounts of Helen's birth. (1) From an egg from Nemesis. In his union with her, Zeus took the form of a gander (*Cypria* fr. 10 B = fr. 8 Davies), not Isoc.' swan. In Cratinus *Nemesis*, however, he took the form of a swan (*Epit.* ii K-A [*PMG* 4.179]). (2) From an egg from Leda. Only *Hel.* 257-59. These lines are bracketed, however, in most eds.

them in appearance” (61). Now comes the passage on Helen’s immortality quoted above. Her immortality is, then, implicitly the result of her beauty.¹² As for her “god-like power,” its source is not clear. Earlier Isocrates said Zeus wished to raise the persons (σώματα) of Heracles and Helen to the gods (17), putting the matter in terms of Zeus’ intention (βουλόμενος, without further specification), an intention that we know was fulfilled in the case of Heracles. As for Helen, of the sources that we have, only the plays of Euripides cited in the preceding paragraph would have given Isocrates any authority for her divinity and this authority was hardly established.

To say, as Isocrates does in the passage under discussion (61), that Helen is immortal is not by itself to say that she is a goddess. If immortality were the sufficient condition of divinity, even Tithonus would be a god. Isocrates refers, however, to the power that Helen has acquired as “god-like,” using the definite article, “*the* god-like power” and thus apparently pointing to the immortality he has just mentioned as its source. Of gods one does not say that their power is “god-like,” and, at least for the moment, Helen is not a goddess. What she does with this power, however, presupposes that she is indeed divine. She raises her brothers from the dead “to the gods” (verb ἀνάγειν, which is *vox propria* for resurrection¹³) and, as a confirmation of their new status, makes them rescuers of mortals. This piece of Greek myth is unparalleled, and indeed it contradicts everything else reported about the Dioscuri.¹⁴ It is a matter of Isocrates’ piecing together a unique Iliadic datum concerning mortal Dioscuri, i.e., both of them dead and buried in Lacedaemon (*Il.* 3.243-44; n.b. verb κατέχειν, the same verb used by Isocrates) with another datum, the known fact of their efficacy as rescuers (*Hymn. Hom.* 33; *Alc.* 34 V, etc.).¹⁵ In Isocrates’ logic, the Dioscuri could not be rescuers in this world if they were buried in Lacedaemon. They had to have been resurrected. Further, their powers had to have been conferred

¹² The reading of Isoc. *Hel.* by Worman 2002: 165-69 emphasizes the reciprocity between encomiastic style and the beauty of Helen.

¹³ Edmunds 1981: 231.

¹⁴ Zajonz 2002: 275.

¹⁵ Elsewhere, either they are both beneath the earth, exchanging death and life on alternate days (*Od.* 11. 301-4; with τοὺς ... κατέχει ... αἴα cf. Isocrates’ κατεχομένους), or Castor is mortal and Polydeices immortal (*Cypria* fr. 8 B = fr. 6 Davies), or on alternate days one lives on Olympus and the other beneath Therapnē (*Pind. Nem.* 10. 55-60; *Pyth.* 11.63-64). For a survey of the Dioscuri in Pindar see Robbins 1994: 41-45.

on them by someone. Isocrates supplies a new cause for this new mythical construct, namely Helen. It is a matter of the encomiastic device already described. In short, this divinity of the Dioscuri is an encomiastic invention or reinvention.

Next come Helen's deification of Menelaus and their joint-cult at Therapnē.

Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τοσαύτην Μενελάῳ χάριν ἀπέδωκεν ὑπὲρ τῶν πόνων καὶ τῶν κινδύνων, οὓς δι' ἐκείνην ὑπέμεινε, ὥστε τοῦ γένους ἅπαντος τοῦ Πελοπιδῶν διαφθαρέντος καὶ κακοῖς ἀνηκέστοις περιπεσόντος, οὐ μόνον αὐτὸν τῶν συμφορῶν τούτων ἀπήλλαξε ἀλλὰ καὶ θεὸν ἀντὶ θνητοῦ ποιήσασα σύνοικον αὐτῇ καὶ πάρεδρον εἰς ἅπαντα τὸν αἰῶνα κατεστήσατο. (62) Καὶ τούτοις ἔχω τὴν πόλιν τὴν Σπαρτιατῶν τὴν μάλιστα τὰ παλαιὰ διασώζουσιν ἔργῳ παρασχέσθαι μαρτυροῦσαν· ἔτι γὰρ καὶ νῦν ἐν Θεράπναις τῆς Λακωνικῆς θυσίας αὐτοῖς ἁγίας καὶ πατρίας ἀποτελοῦσιν οὐχ ὡς ἥρωσιν, ἀλλ' ὡς θεοῖς ἀμφοτέροις οὖσιν (63).

Thereafter she rendered such favor to Menelaus for the toils and dangers he had endured for her that, when the whole race of the Pelopids was destroyed and fallen into fatal misfortunes, not only did she free him from these disasters but even made him a god instead of a mortal and established him as the one who sits beside her for all time. And as witnesses to these facts I can offer the city of the Spartiates, the one that especially preserves ancient traditions (lit., "the old things"). For still today in Therapnē, in Laconia, they render holy ancestral sacrifices to them, not as to heroes but as to gods, both of them.

As the immortality of Helen, mentioned as the outset (61 init.), soon became god-like power and she elevated her brothers "to the gods," so, too, she now elevates Menelaus to this status. The afterlife of Helen and Menelaus in the Elysian Field (cf. above) is forgotten. Isocrates offers another new mythical construct in the manner already noticed. Here he has a particular datum from the joint-cult on which to elaborate, i.e., the form of sacrifice offered in this cult—"not as to heroes but as to gods," he says. Scholars have usually assumed that Isocrates means the complete agenda of sacrifice to gods. But his "holy ancestral sacrifices"

is vague. He would have been seizing on one or more of the several *differentiae* as between the cults of heroes and of gods.¹⁶ For Isocrates' purposes, even a single detail in the worship of Helen and Menelaus at Therapnē, perhaps introduced by priests desiring to upgrade the cult, would have sufficed as the basis of his large claim. Isocrates' description of the form of sacrifice does not in itself have to be taken as false; his large claim is another matter, a properly encomiastic one.

For the understanding of Isocrates' "not as to heroes but as to gods" in relation to sacrifice a phrase in Pindar *Olympian* 7 (to Diagoras of Rhodes, 464 B.C.E.) is helpful.¹⁷ One of the three myths in this ode concerns Tleptolemus' murder of Likymnius and his settlement of Rhodes (20-33). Pindar returns briefly to the myth later in the ode and refers to a cult:

τόθι λύτρον συμφορᾶς οἰκτρᾶς γλυκὺ Γλαπολέμῳ
 ἴσταται Τιρυνθίων ἀρχαγέτα,
 ὥσπερ θεῶ,
 μῆλων τε κνισάεσσα πομπὰ
 καὶ κρίσις ἀμφ' ἀέθλοισι. 77-80

There for Tleptolemus, leader of those from Tiyrns (his hometown)—sweet requital for lamentable misfortune—are established as if to a god a procession of sheep for steaming sacrifice and decision-bringing games.¹⁸

The misfortune is his slaying of Licymnius (27-32).¹⁹ Pindar gives a lapidary notice of games (the Tleptolemeia) and the sacrifice to Tleptolemus.²⁰ The kind of cult is recognizable: honors to a founder or colonizer (*oikistēs*) as hero.²¹ Tleptolemus was the *oikistēs* of Rhodes. Thucydides tells how the people of Amphipolis, in gratitude to Brasidas

¹⁶ For the *differentiae*: von Geisau 1967: 1104-5.

¹⁷ For those "honored as a god" in Homer see Webster 1958: 105-107.

¹⁸ Slater 1969 s.v. ἀμφί A.III.3: "in respect of, in the field of, esp. of what is at stake."

¹⁹ The passage that I have quoted raises two larger issues that happen not be directly related to the small point that I am making. One is the religious ideology of "compensation," on which see Nagy 1990: 140-42. The other is the tradition concerning the settlement of Rhodes: see Kirk 1985 on *Il.* 2.668-70.

²⁰ The Tleptolemeia are referred to also in Dittenberg. *Syll.*³ no. 1067.7 (Rhodes, second c. B.C.E.).

²¹ Hornblower 1991: 20-21 (on 1.4) for the institution.

for his liberation of their city from the Athenians, made him their *oikistēs*.²² They buried him in the city; sacrificed to him as to a hero; paid him the honor of games and yearly sacrifices (5.11.1). As this example shows, the hero's grave is focal. The cult of Tleptolemus on Rhodes presupposes that his companions brought his remains from Troy, where he was killed by Sarpedon (*Il.* 5.628-662).²³ His bones would have been collected and saved in a jar after his pyre burned down (cf. *Il.* 23.238-44 [Patroclus]; 24.792-94 [Hector]; *Od.* 24.71-75 [Achilles]).

No one has ever doubted that the cult of Tleptolemus was a hero cult.²⁴ Why, then, Pindar's "as if to a god"? The explanation is not far to seek. As the scholiast explained, "the compensation is set up for him as for the gods, for he gets distinguished sacrifices and games are dedicated to him."²⁵ The scholiast takes the form of sacrifice as part of the explanation of "as if to a god," which, it should be noted, he paraphrases "as for the gods," i.e., he uses ὡς, not ὡσπερ. Isocrates says similarly and more fully "not as (ὡς) to heroes but as (ὡς) to gods." Isocrates' ὡς κτλ. and Pindar's ὡσπερ κτλ. are different ways of saying the same thing. As was suggested earlier, it was the form of sacrifice in the cult at Therapnē that was the datum on which Isocrates was building. The clearer case of the sacrifice to Tleptolemus corroborates this suggestion.

²² Willcock 1995: 130 on lines 77-80 cites the cult of Brasidas among others.

²³ Fernández-Gallano 1956: 228 on line 78.

²⁴ Farnell 1932: 56: "The hero-founder was naturally worshipped as ἀρχηγέτης; Pindar's words ὡσπερ θεῶ by no means prove that the Rhodians were worshipping Tleptolemos as a god" Fernández-Gallano 1956: 228: "seguramente quiere decir 'como a un semiodios'." Lehnus 1981: 117 translates: "destino eroico"; he comments (123) on lines 77-80: "eroicizzazione di Tlapolemos." (On ὡσπερ θεῶ Gildersleeve 1885 has nothing relevant to the present discussion; Kirkwood 1982 has nothing.) Verdenius 1987: 81 on line 80, referring to von Geisau 1967 (list of differentiae between hero cult and divine cult) states: "The use of θεός does not necessarily imply that the offerings to Tleptolemus were not completely burnt ..., for θεός means 'divine being', which comprises both gods and heroes" I.e., Tleptolemus was a hero (offerings to heroes were completely burnt). Verdenius' comment on the semantics of θεός is odd and seems to miss Pindar's point, viz., that Tleptolemus receives distinctive honor. Even if Verdenius' general observation on the semantics is correct, it is here irrelevant.

²⁵ Schol. *O* 7.141c.1 (BCDEQ) Drachmann 1.229: ἴσταται δὲ αὐτῷ τὸ λυτήριον ὡς τοῖς θεοῖς· θυσία γὰρ αὐτῷ διάφοροι γίνονται καὶ ἀγῶνες τελοῦνται.

The divinity of Helen at Therapnē depends, then, on the encomiastic device defined and illustrated above. Isocrates' concluding remarks on the power (δύναμις) of Helen as a goddess as shown in her blinding of Stesichorus could as well argue for her power as a heroine (64).²⁶ There is no reason, finally, to believe in Helen's divinity in the cult at Therapnē any more than in Isocrates' obvious inventions, the divinity of Menelaus and Helen's elevation of her brothers to the gods.²⁷ Isocrates nowhere in his encomium of Helen goes so far as to call Helen a goddess, for the simple reason that he knew she was not a goddess. It is Menelaus whom, with paradoxical bravado, he calls a god (θεός) and her *parhedros*. The cult on which he lavishes this encomiastic wit was a hero cult, like the cult of Alessandra-Cassandra at Amyclae and like many another archaic hero cult.²⁸ To explain such cults all that is necessary is Greek myth and epic.²⁹ Hector Catling, to quote an archaeologist on the matter, said of the Menelaion: "The shrine is ... a classic instance of cult created deliberately out of nostalgia for the Heroic past"³⁰ In short, the cult of Helen and Menelaus at Therapnē, although somewhat unusual as the cult of a couple, fits into a well-known pattern of archaic hero cult.³¹

²⁶ Salapata 2002: 145-46 on the dangers of angry heroines.

²⁷ The deification of Menelaus, unattested anywhere else, is Isocrates's invention. Zajonz 2002: 279.

²⁸ For the cult of Alessandra-Cassandra cf. Salapata 2002.

²⁹ Nagy 1999[1979] 114-17 asserts the evolution of hero cult from earlier ancestor worship. As Coldstream 1976 shows, regional distinctions are necessary: "some local heroes may have been venerated all through the Dark Age, long before the circulation of Homeric epic; when the epic cycle became widely known, more cults for named heroes might grow up in regions where there had been no such continuity—for example, in the Dorian Peloponnese" (17).

³⁰ Catling 1976-1977: 34. Quoted by Antonaccio 1995: 166. The critique of Antonaccio 1995 by Deoudi 1999: 125 n. 619 takes the form of an argument from authority, i.e., a list of earlier scholars who asserted the divinity of Helen at Therapnē.

³¹ The only other famous couple who have a cult is Pelops and Hippodameia, at Olympia. Kearns 1998, surveying the "couple acting together," refers to Metaneira and Keleos at Eleusis; Pelarge and Isthmiades at the Theban Kabeirion; and Klymene and Dictys. Alcman fr. 7 Page, Davies = 19 Calame, from a fragmentary commentary on Alcman, seems to be referring to Menelaus, Helen, and the Dioscuri as worshipped at Therapnē. The various references to the Dioscuri at Therapnē do not include mention of a shrine. Parker Forthcoming suggests that "Therapnē in general usage could stretch as far as the

The archaeological evidence has, of course, been used to argue that Helen and Menelaus really were gods and not heroes at Therapnē. The goal of the present discussion was not, however, to settle the archaeological question, nor was it to combine literary and archaeological evidence or to confront one kind of evidence with the other. The much more limited goal was to reconsider Isocrates' *Encomium of Helen* as a source for the nature of the cult of Helen and Menelaus at Therapnē. It has been possible to show that nothing in this work requires that they be understood as gods. On the contrary, their divinity is merely (and abundantly!) encomiastic. Isocrates did not expect anyone to take his great hyperboles (τηλικαύταις ὑπερβολαῖς, 54) literally.³²

Scholars whose research lies outside myth, i.e., Greek myth in Greek literature, may find words like "invention" jarring. Is not Greek myth something relatively fixed and does it not have an exemplary value that is relatively stable? Could Isocrates have taken the liberties imputed to him in this article? The answer is that Greek myth is relatively mutable and its exemplary value is ad hoc. As a coda to this article, some brief comments on the tradition of Isocrates' practice are offered.

When a Homeric hero retells a myth, it is an exemplum that seeks to address present circumstances.³³ The following pattern is typical in Homer. (1) The narrator finds a particular point of contact between the myth and the situation to which he or she applies it. (2) He or she uses the myth to argue for a course of action or to illustrate a relevant gnome. (3) Because of (1) and (2), he or she adapts the story, producing a version in some way new. (4) He or she concludes by reasserting the myth's relevance to the present situation. Sometimes the adaptation is so novel that it seems as if a new myth is being invented.³⁴ Phoenix' retelling of

Phoibaion," where Paus. 3.20.2 says that the Dioscuri had a shrine. Cf. Calame 1997: 200 for the presumed removal of the Dioscuri to another place in Sparta.

³² As Zajonz 2002: 254 points out, Isoc. seems here to contradict his introduction (13), where he says that hyperbole is easy in trivial matters, whereas it is difficult to attain the measure of the noble and beautiful, i.e., hyperbole is beyond reach (as he says at 4.88 concerning Xerxes). On τηλικαύταις see Zajonz 2002: 240.

³³ Slater 1977: 195.

³⁴ The typology is based on the one in Edmunds 1997: 419-20. Myths that are told in Homer are conventionally and appropriately called paradeigmata, as by Willcock 1964. In this article, I argue (429-32), with particular reference to Phoenix' version of the myth of Meleager (and citing March 1987 and Nagy

the myth of Meleager is a well-known example. The scanty evidence for the narrated mythical exemplum in archaic solo lyric and elegy does not permit firm conclusions, but it seems as if the poet's practice is the same as the one just outlined. The myths in Pindar and in the choruses of tragedy, although often more complexly related to the circumstances to which they refer, have the same exemplary purpose.³⁵ As for mythical novelty in choral lyric, the most famous example is perhaps Pindar's retelling of the story of Pelops in *Olympian* 1 (37-52).³⁶ Athenian orators' abundant use of mythical exempla has been seen as continuous with the practice of the Homeric heroes.³⁷

In Isocrates the exemplarity of Helen, who surpasses all other women in birth, beauty, and fame, is a given, and the challenge to the composer of an encomium about her is to say something that others have not already said (13, 15). Isocrates intends his own oration to be itself exemplary, both as against contemporary practice (and against Gorgias' earlier effort) and an inspiration for future orators, to whom it still lies open to say new things about Helen (καινοὶ λόγοι, 69). Innovation is, then, programmatic, and it leads to the paradoxical results already noticed, as well as to suppression of any indication of culpability on Helen's part.³⁸

"Paradoxical" happens to occur in Isocrates' opening sentence, where he refers with scorn to contemporary philosophical disputation. Has he, then, excluded the application of the word to himself? The answer is no, if one follows an interpretation of the prooemium (1-15) that goes back to Aristotle. He took it as an example of the epideictic prooemium that is in itself unrelated to the subject of the oration that it

1991), that "it is the speaker who creates the 'innovation' in a myth, in response to the demands of the situation in which he or she is speaking. Thus it would be more accurate to say that *Homer represents his characters as innovating* than it is to say that Homer innovates" (emphasis as in the original). For a critique of Willcock 1977, see Nagy 1991.

³⁵ For the narrated mythical exemplum in archaic solo lyric and elegy, with some comments on Pindar and tragedy, see Edmunds 2009.

³⁶ Seidensticker 2008 defines a category of "correction of myth" (*Mythenkorrektur*), of which Pindar's Pelops is an example. Seidensticker's article is a useful reminder that a practice that we think of as characteristic of modern reception of Greek myth was going on from an early time in ancient Greece.

³⁷ Gotteland 2001: 11.

³⁸ Zajonz 2002: 21-22.

introduces (*Rhet.* 1414b19-28; cf. Quint. *Inst.* 3.8.9).³⁹ On this interpretation, Isocrates would not be contradicting himself if he went in for paradoxology in the encomium itself, and one would be free to speak, with the French, of an “*éloge paradoxal*.”⁴⁰ One would also have removed the apparent contradiction between the prooemium and Isocrates’ reference to the “hyperboles” of his own work. To conclude, it is tempting to speak of Isocrates’ cult of Helen and Menelaus at Therapnē, although not in the same unfriendly spirit, in a phrase that Polybius used of Timaeus, ὑπερβολὴ τῆς παραδοξολογίας (Timaeus *FGrH* 566 T 19 [26c] = Polyb. 12.26c.1).⁴¹

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³⁹ At the same time, the prooemium coheres with the rest of the speech in various ways, as Zajonz 2002: 37-57 argues, taking into account the whole history of scholarship on the structure and import of Isoc. *Hel*. These larger questions lie outside the scope of the present article, which has not attempted to repeat Zajonz’ copious references.

⁴⁰ Saïd, Trédé, and Le Boulleuc 1997: 253. Cf. Gotteland 2001: 115.

⁴¹ I am grateful to Kristen Baxter for comments on the final drafts of this article and to the editor of this journal for a careful reading. I am grateful to Robert Parker for sending me a pdf of his forthcoming article and for corresponding with me on various points.

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